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The Pillar

A Drama in One Act

By KIDO OKAMOTO

Translated from the Japanese by
Zoe Kincaid and Hanso Tarao



SAMUEL FRENCH

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UTAYEMON NAKAMURA AS IWOKO

The head priestess of a Shinto shrine who has received a revelation that a sacrifice must be made to please the god of the river in order that the new bridge shall remain.

Capital. 15

DEC 27 1940

THE HUMAN PILLAR

INTRODUCTION

The latest of Kido Okamoto's plays, the Human Pillar, is based on an old legend having for theme a living sacrifice to placate the gods. It was produced at the Kabuki-za, Tokyo, in April of this year.

According to an ancient Japanese belief, a human sacrifice was necessary to ensure the permanence of a bridge, the living sacrifice being sunk beneath the first pillar. Of similar gruesome character was the practice when emperors died of burying their attendants alive in the tomb with their imperial masters. In course of time, the inhumanity of this practice came to be recognized, and clay figures were substituted.

Mr. Okamoto's drama concerns the bridge over the Nagara river near Osaka. Previous bridges were repeatedly washed away by the spring floods. To ensure the strength and permanence of the new bridge recourse was had to extraordinary methods. A barrier was placed upon the highway, and the arrest ordered of the first man to approach with patches on his skirt or hakama—in other words, a poor man. By mischance it happened that the first to approach answering the description was a choja, a man of consequence living near by. He was seized, and buried in the river, despite his protestations.

This incident is supposed to have occurred in the reign of the Emperor Kotoku (645-654 A. D.), who issued a decree to the above effect from his palace at Toyosaki.

It is upon such historical and legendary facts that Mr. Okamoto has founded his drama which, while it is placed a thousand years ago, is yet a symbol of the intolerance and prejudice of the present day and the struggle of the soul against old beliefs and customs. The popular dramatist of modern Japan has shown in the Human Pillar his partiality for the craftsman, as in the Mask-Maker and other of his many plays.

ZOE KINCAID.

Tokyo, Nov. 2, 1928.

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

IWOKO, *priestess of a Shinto Shrine.*

TORIKO, *sister to Iwoko, also a priestess.*

TOYOHICO, *a student.*

BAN-NO-TOKISUKE, *an official of Government.*

YASUKUMA, *a master builder.*

OGUMA, *his assistant.*

SUGIMARU, *another assistant.*

KASHIO, *a villager.*

TSUNADE, *a housewife.*

MAROYA, *a village girl.*

TSUGUNARI, *a fisherman.*

AKANA, *servant to Toyohiko.*

Priestesses of the Shrine, Attendants of Tokisuke, and Villagers.

TIME AND PLACE OF PLAY: *The month of June in the third year of the era of Konin, during the reign of the Emperor Saga, A. D. 812. The scene at Nagara, near the city of Naniwa, the present Osaka.*

The Human Pillar

SCENE I

SETTING: Bank of the Nagara River, province of Settsu, on an afternoon in early summer. The centre of the bank is broken and overgrown by grass. Here and there are willow trees. Wild pinks grow in the crevices of the rocks. A path leads down the embankment.

On one side are piled the timbers for a new bridge. In the background, across the river, are seen ricefields, farmhouses, and in the distance the forest.

YASUKUMA, the bridge-builder, an elderly man, and his two assistants, OGUMA and SUGIMARU, are seated on the timber, while the housewife TSUNADE, and the girl MAROYA, are seated on the bank. Two villagers and a fisherman sit or stand; the sound of flowing water is heard.

FIRST VILLAGER

The season of flowers is gone, and summer has come all at once! It is hot in the daytime, isn't it?

SECOND VILLAGER

But the willow trees cast a cool shade.

SUGIMARU

Out on the river-bed, the eyes are almost blinded by the glare of the pebbles.

TSUNADE

You should not complain of the heat, for to-day the master of the big house is to offer himself for a sacrifice—a pillar for the new bridge!

MAROYA.

I heard about it—do you think it true?

FISHERMAN

It is. The priestess of the shrine of Toyosaki said that it would take place.

FIRST VILLAGER

Since the old days we have been helpless: every time the river is at flood the bridge is washed away. Is that not so, Master Yasukuma?

[The bridge-builder remains silent, absorbed in thought.]

TSUNADE

The god revealed the other day that a human sacrifice would have to be placed beneath the first pillar of the bridge, if it is to stand for years.

SECOND VILLAGER

Such a revelation is taken for truth, but no one will volunteer—each man covets his own life, and believes he must live for the benefit of all.

YASUKUMA (*speaking for the first time*)

As soon as I heard the oracle, I wished to be the pillar.

FISHERMAN

But they would not listen to you, for then there would be no one to build the bridge!

YASUKUMA (*rising*)

I have rebuilt the bridge three times. I do not know how often it has been built before. Three times—for three times—(*repeating himself*) and it is always washed away! Three times, wasn't it? It proves I am a poor builder! Because of my failures, it is only right that I offer myself as the sacrifice.

OGUMA (*rising and speaking excitedly*)

Yes, it is as the master says! It could be well built, no matter how long the span, if we only knew our work!

FISHERMAN

There is another way to look at it. Unless the bridge pleases the god of the water, it cannot be perfect, even though made by master hands.

SECOND VILLAGER

That is so! It does not mean you are unskilled, but that the will of the god was not known. The master of the big house is a most venerable man.

YASUKUMA (*with a sigh*)

Yes, he is deeply respected, and all were astonished when we heard that he was to be the human pillar, if it is necessary to offer one.

TSUNADE

He is the head of the village of Nagara, and the richest man in the district. No one expected him to make such a sacrifice, since he has everything he wishes.

SUGIMARU

He was always a virtuous man, and has voluntarily sacrificed himself for the good of the people.

OGUMA

Perhaps that is what he thinks: for my part I regret it. Cannot the bridge be built without such a sacrifice?

FISHERMAN

You still complain! There are many things a young man like you does not know.

OGUMA

Do you understand this matter?

FISHERMAN

Well, I cannot say that I do clearly.

OGUMA

If you have only a faint idea, you had better say you do not understand!

YASUKUMA

Stop! There is no need to discuss the matter. It is already arranged; the master is to be put in a chest to-night, and sunk under the first pillar of the bridge. After that, we will begin our work. (*To OGUMA and SUGIMARU.*) I have something to tell you. Come with me! Come!

[YASUKUMA is about to leave, followed by the others, when KASHIO enters from right along the top of the embankment with a bow and arrows in his hands.

Oh, Kashio! Where are you going, armed?

KASHIO

I'm out after a pheasant! The priestess has asked me to bring one to her—she is going to offer it to the god. But I can't find one!

FISHERMAN

You were asked to bring a pheasant! I was ordered to catch a carp, and I've already taken a big one to the shrine.

KASHIO

Have you! Then I must do my best before dark!

SUGIMARU (*pointing to the left*)

The woods over there are full of pheasants!

KASHIO

Yes! I was thinking of going in that direction.

[Exit left, using a whistle to attract the birds.]

YASUKUMA

We are not the only ones who are busy! At such a time as this, everyone has something to do!

[He takes the path up the embankment, looking over his shoulder at OGUMA and SUGIMARU, who follow, and exeunt.]

TSUNADE

Let's be going now!

[The cry of a pheasant is heard.]

MAROYA

Ah! There's a pheasant!

TSUNADE

It's Kashio whistling!

FIRST VILLAGER

No! It's a pheasant! We ought to let him know!

SECOND VILLAGER

All right!

[They go up the path, and exeunt right.]

FISHERMAN (*to TSUNADE*)

I'm going your way; let us go together!

[Ascending path, exit with MAROYA. A pheasant's call is heard, and KASHIO enters.]

KASHIO

They were right; pheasants are here, but I can't catch one!

[Exit right, looking up into the sky. Enter IWANO-TOYOHICO, a young man attired in travelling costume, who has come from the capital, and AKANA, his servant.]

TOYOHICO (*looking about him*)

The scene is unchanged; it is exactly as it was when I left!

AKANA

We are so familiar with it, but do you see no change?

TOYOHICO

Not only is the scene unchanged, but the minds of the people are not altered in the least. That is why such a thing as a human pillar is possible. I would have known nothing about it, but for your bringing me the news.

AKANA

The old master told me not to let you know, but it was so serious, I had to hasten to tell you.

TOYOHICO

You did right! There are many servants in my house, but none of them of use in such a crisis. I should have lost my dear father if you had not come; I must hasten to stop him!

AKANA

Will you try to prevent it at any cost?

TOYOHICO

I will!

AKANA (*thoughtfully*)

But will the old master agree with you?

TOYOHICO

Whether he agrees or not, I will surely stop him, using every argument in my power. Now let us make haste!

[*They walk to the right, when AKANA suddenly pulls his master by the sleeve.*]

AKANA

Sir, Toriko is coming toward us!

TOYOHICO

Ah, yes! Toriko! She has grown to be a beautiful woman during my absence!

AKANA

Both she and her sister are held in high repute here as priestesses.

[*Enter, right, TORIKO, a priestess of the Toyosaki Shrine.*]

TORIKO

Toyohiko! I thought it was you! (*She runs toward him.*) Oh, I've been waiting for your return!

TOYOHICO

I've been longing to see you! Although the distance between the capital and the village is not great, we have not been able to send messages to each other! Are things the same with you?

TORIKO

My sister and I are well, and serve the shrine all the time. It is almost three years since you left us. (*Looking at him admiringly.*) How handsome you are!

TOYOHICO

I was just saying the same about you—you have become very beautiful! How well I remember the last evening before I started for the capital in pursuit of learning! I was with you here on the bank of the river! Yes, it was under this very willow tree that we met!

TORIKO

And I wept, leaning against the tree, when you told me you were going away to study, and would not return for many years!

TOYOHICO

The foliage on the tree is thick, as in the past, and we meet again! Three years are short, although at the time they seemed very long.

AKANA

Well, young master, I will go ahead, and tell them that you have returned. Allow me to take leave. (*Exit.*)

TOYOHICO

I want to ask you something, Toriko! Is it true that a human pillar is to be offered as a foundation for the Nagara bridge?

TORIKO

Yes, the god's will was made known to us.

TOYOHICO

To whom?

TORIKO

To my sister.

TOYOHICO

To your sister! Then what Akana told me is true! I half doubted what he said, as he is not always truthful, and . . . has my father decided?

TORIKO

When my sister learned of his sacrifice, she shed tears, and thinks it is a noble act!

TOYOHICO (*pained and surprised*)

What nonsense is this!

TORIKO

Nonsense?

TOYOHICO

Yes, indeed, nonsense! A grave mistake, beyond imagination! I cannot bear the loss of

my beloved father for such a stupid cause!
Not only my father! How can you tolerate the
death of anyone in the village! A thousand
times, No!

TORIKO

Then you do not believe in my sister, who is
regarded as a living god by the people!

TOYOHICO

Believe! I cannot believe! No matter how
hard I try,—and so I return in haste!

*[As TORIKO looks into his face, a pheasant
pierced by an arrow falls at their feet. They
jump back, quickly.]*

TORIKO

A bird from the sky!

TOYOHICO

It is a pheasant—there is an arrow in it!

*[He picks it up, and is examining it, when
KASHIO enters from the right, bow in hand.]*

KASHIO

Ah, young master, you have come back!

TOYOHICO

Is it you, Kashio! Why have you bow and
arrows? Did you shoot this one?

KASHIO

I got this after wandering about for half a
day! The priestess ordered me to get it.

TOYOHICO

According to her bidding . . . !

KASHIO

It is to be offered before the god when the human pillar is sunk. Tsugunari, the fisherman, was to get a carp, and I a pheasant.

TOYOHICO

This is to be placed before the god when the sacrifice is offered! You are a young man of intelligence, and yet you run about on such an errand! Throw it away!

[He dashes the pheasant to the ground.]

KASHIO (*alarmed*)

Oh! . . . that is sacrilegious!

[He picks it up quickly.]

TOYOHICO

This is where I was born! Why is the village of Nagara so full of superstitious people!

[Enter OGUMA, right.]

OGUMA

Young master! I have come hurriedly to meet you! I heard from Akana that you had arrived! You know about the pillar?

TOYOHICO

Yes, I have heard about it! I have heard!

OGUMA

Oh, sir! Can't we stop it!

TOYOHICO

You object, too!

OGUMA

The bridge must be built, but let us do it without a sacrifice!

TOYOHICO

Is not your master the best builder in Naniwazu! It is his disgrace that he cannot build a bridge that will last!

OGUMA

I am ashamed of our work, for it will be said of us that we can only build a bridge by means of a human sacrifice. We want to build the bridge ourselves, without the aid of gods or buddhas!

TORIKO

You are very excited, but have not all the bridges you have made been washed away?

TOYOHICO

There is a reason why they have been destroyed! But you have to work!

OGUMA

We must try again, and if we fail, Oguma will be the human pillar, and jump into the river without asking anyone else to do it!

TOYOHICO

Now I must speak to my father! When is the pillar to be sunk?

TORIKO

This evening.

TOYOHICO (*alarmed*)

This evening! You should have told me it was to be so soon!

OGUMA

Many persons have already gathered in front of your house.

TOYOHICO

I have returned in time! It could never have been undone had I been a day late!

[He is about to go, but TORIKO clings to him.]

TORIKO

Dear Toyohiko! Believe in my sister! I entreat you!

[He hesitates a second, then shakes her off, and without speaking runs away. Exit right.]

OGUMA

I may be able to help him!

[Exit, running after TOYOHICO. TORIKO stands alone, weeping.]

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The riverside at twilight. A deep-blue expanse of sky and water. In the centre of the stage, a Shinto altar facing the river—a square platform approached by steps. At each corner of the platform are placed bamboo, and between their plume-like fronds is hung a straw fringe decorated at intervals with cut paper—the Shinto symbol of purification.

In the centre of the platform is IWAKO, the priestess, wearing a pure white robe, holding a white shide, or Shinto wand, in her hand. Her back is turned to the audience, and she is in the attitude of prayer. At the corners of the platform kneel TORIKO and three other priestesses, likewise clad in white.

On either side of the altar, fires are burning in iron tripods. To right and left musicians kneel in rows. BAN-NO-TOKISUKE, an official from the capital, sits on the bank, his servants beside him.

To right and left are grouped villagers, kneeling, in costumes of blue, orange, violet, green, and yellow. Among them are the elders of the village, the fisherman, the builder, TSUNADE, and MAROYA. Musicians perform the ancient music of the Court on reed instruments, drum, and flute. The four priestesses descend from the platform, and dance slowly and with reverence to propitiate the deity.

TOKISUKE

This is the appointed time for the ceremony, but he who is to be the sacrifice has not yet come.

VILLAGE ELDER

He will be here soon. Please wait a little.

TOKISUKE

As I have come from the capital to supervise the bridge work, it will be a grave omission in the carrying out of my official duties if there be any hitch in the proceedings. I am therefore anxious. Is all prepared to drive in the first pillar immediately after the sacrifice?

ELDER

All is ready!

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[He turns his head to look at YASUKUMA, who comes forward to address the official.]

YASUKUMA

We are to begin work to-morrow morning without delay.

TOKISUKE

You are quite sure?

YASUKUMA

Yes, sir.

[Two villagers run in with torches in their hands.]

FIRST VILLAGER

The master has already left his house!

ELDER

The official has been kept waiting a long time; there is no trouble, is there?

SECOND VILLAGER

No trouble—not exactly—but ——

[He hesitates, and looks at his companion.]

TOKISUKE (*closely attentive*)

Talk plainly!

FIRST VILLAGER (*hesitatingly*)

His son has returned from the capital,
and ——

ELDER

His son! Has Master Toyohiko returned
home?

SECOND VILLAGER

That is the reason of the delay.

TOKISUKE

Then father and son are slow to part from
each other—that is but natural.

FIRST VILLAGER

But that is not all! (SECOND VILLAGER *pulls
sleeve of companion.*) Hold your tongue!

ELDER

That is not all! Has something else happened?

[*The two villagers look at each other and hesi-
tate.*]

TOKISUKE

You are not plain-spoken! You rogues, if you
are hiding something from me, you cannot
avoid punishment.

VILLAGERS

Well, sir! (*Still hesitating.*)

[*From right, enter many villagers surrounding a
plain white wooden box supported by four
legs. The group is preceded by three villagers
carrying torches. The box is draped about*

with the straw fringe and cut paper of Shinto, and is borne by men in white costumes. TOYOHIKO follows. All rise to their feet at sight of the box, within which is the sacrifice.

FISHERMAN

It is coming! It is coming!

TSUNADE

Here they are carrying the box!

ELDER

Silence! Silence!

[The solemn procession crosses to centre of stage, where the box is put down before the platform.]

TOKISUKE

Ah! the sacrifice is here! Ask the reverend priestess what we shall do with it.

ELDER

Yes, sir. *(He approaches the altar.)* Reverend priestess, what shall we do with the box? It has just come.

IWOKO *(turning)*

Is it here? *(Making a sign to her subordinates.)* Now begin!

[All turn and face the audience.]

In this box lies a precious human sacrifice!

[TOKISUKE and all present make obeisance.]

The official from the capital, the village elder, and men of Nagara must be aware of the meaning of this sacrifice, but the people gathered here may not know the origin and history

of the human pillar, having heard only the gossip of idle tongues. Listen attentively to me.

[*All bow their heads, TOYOHICO alone refusing to bend.*

One hundred and sixty years ago, in the reign of the good Emperor Kotoku, in the era of Taikwa, the Emperor commanded that bridges be built in all the provinces near the capital. The first was the bridge of Uji; the second was the bridge of Nagara. This was to better the means of communication between the people. Repeatedly the bridge of Nagara has been destroyed by the floods; repeatedly has it been rebuilt —

[IWOKO *glances about at the people, and TOYOHICO advances.*

TOYOHICO

Although you are living in this place, most of you know nothing of the river. It is divided into two branches, and it is but natural that the bridges should be washed away during the heavy rains of spring and autumn unless they are most strongly built. Why make a mystery of it when the reason is so clear?

IWOKO

You may reason as you please, but listen to what I have to say. The order has come from the capital that the Nagara bridge be reconstructed. Experience has shown that it cannot last long. Therefore the people have thought much about this matter. I have been praying

to the god with all my heart that this time there be no trouble, and one night a revelation was granted to me——

TOYOHICO (*with a bitter laugh*)

I see! I see! In a revelation the god made known to the sacred priestess that a human sacrifice was demanded! Did you see the image of the god, and hear his voice?

IWOKO

I saw his image, and heard his voice!

TOYOHICO

Of course, you would say so!

IWOKO

Do you not believe in the gods or buddhas?

TOYOHICO

It is not the question whether there are gods or buddhas—I doubt the need for a human pillar!

IWOKO

Then do you think I am using the name of the god to impose upon the people!

[TOYOHICO *does not answer, but turns and looks at the people.*]

TOYOHICO

It is useless to speak with the priestess! I have something to tell you! I went to the capital to study, and there I was taught at a new school called the Kangaku-in. I have learned from a book called Mogyu. Do you understand me? Mogyu is a Chinese book. In this there is a story, and I shall relate it.

ELDER

Master Toyohiko, I do not know how interesting the story in Mogyu may be, but the time is not well chosen to narrate at length when the official from the capital is waiting!

TOYOHICO

I want him to hear it also! There was a man in China during the reign of Wen Hou of the Wei dynasty. His name was Hsi Men-pao. He became the governor of a place called Yeh. Here there was a curious custom. A maiden was offered each year to the god of the river, and if this was neglected, there would be a flood! Aha! Similar stories may be found in every country!

ELDER

Ah, Master Toyohiko!

TOKISUKE

Wait! Wait! It seems the story in Mogyu which Toyohiko read at Kangaku-in has some bearing on the custom observed here to-night! Let him have his say!

TOYOHICO

Listen! When the time came for the sacrifice of the maiden, the governor repaired to the place, and found a splendid altar put up beside the river, and many people, including elders and officials, sitting waiting. The priestess was seated in state with her disciples, ten in number. The maiden was about to be thrown into the river, when the governor ordered them to stop. He said the maiden was not beautiful, and would not please the river god. The sacri-

fice was not to be made this time, but it was not right to fail to inform the river god, and someone must go to report. The governor was silent, and waited, but none volunteered to go. The governor then said that as no one seemed willing to undertake the honorable office, there was nothing to do but ask the priestess to go herself—and with these words, he dragged her from the altar, and cast her into the river!

ALL (*with deep murmurs*)

Oh, oh! Ah, ah!

TOYOHICO

The governor commanded all to wait; and after a while, saying the reverend priestess was long in returning, the attendant priestesses should follow her, in order to escort her back. And he cast them all, one by one, into the river! After that, it is told, the offering of maiden sacrifices ceased.

IWOKO (*coldly*)

Honorable official! This man abuses the god, relating an old story of China, a land he has not visited. He is one who pollutes the deity while dwelling in the land of the gods! Will you not command him to depart from this place!

TOYOHICO

No! The honorable official must appreciate the significance of the story!

TOKISUKE (*thinking*)

I understand the story, but it is not clear to me whether it applies to the custom to be observed to-night.

IWOKO

A man of shallow mind causes evil if his learning does not go deep enough. It is shameful that this man, defying the deity, should be the son of the master, who believes so much in the god that he is willing to sacrifice himself for the good of the people. I shall not be lenient! Banish him from this village, escort him away, even by force!

[The people hesitate, looking at each other.]

What, do you hesitate! Whom do you honor, the god, or the son of the village head? Would you drag me and my four disciples from the altar, and cast us one by one into the river!

TOKISUKE

You are right! We must obey the divine direction—follow the gods in the land of the gods!

TOYOHICO

It is a false god!

IWOKO

You say that the god is false!

TOYOHICO (*in a loud voice*)

It is false! It is false!

TOKISUKE

Let the people gathered here be asked whether they believe in the god or not!

TOYOHICO

That's right! (*Addresses the assembly.*)
People all, do you believe me or not?

TOKISUKE (*also to people*)

Do you believe what the priestess says?

ALL

Aye! aye!

[They bow humbly; TOYOHICO is troubled.]

TOKISUKE

Nothing more need be said! Lift up the box!

[Men clad in white go forward to lift up the box.]

TOYOHICO

No! Stop! I have one more question! Do you think it right, priestess, to sink the box as it is?

IWOKO

By no means!

TOYOHICO

Oh!

IWOKO

It is a deception!

[She turns to the priestesses.]

Do not allow others to do it, but open the box, and show how an attempt has been made to deceive us!

[TORIKO and the others come down from the platform, and taking off the lid of the box, OGUMA is discovered within. The spectators are astonished, and murmurs run through them. TORIKO and her companions return to the platform.]

ELDER

Oh! It is Oguma, the builder!

YASUKUMA. Oguma, why did you take the master's place?

IWOKO (*smiling*)

You tried to cheat the god, and test me by placing a substitute in the box instead of the true sacrifice! You are an accomplished conjuror! You asked me if the box could be sunk without its being opened, and thought I could not see through your poor trick, I, who am in communication with gods! I was well aware of your evil design! Think you not so, people!

ELDER

The priestess has divine power!

ALL

Yes, yes!

TSUNADE

She is a god!

MAROYA

I'm all a-tremble!

OGUMA (*stepping out of box*)

Master Toyohiko! Young master! I'm sorry to have done this!

IWOKO

Master Toyohiko, there is a servant in your house, Akana by name?

TOYOHICO

Oh, Akana! (*He looks round.*) He is not here!

IWOKO. The box containing the master has already been taken to the river, with the god-serving Akana by its side!

TOYOHICO

What! Akana has betrayed me!

[*He and OGUMA attempt to dash away, but are seized by the servants of TOKISUKE. TOYOHICO struggles to free himself.*

Don't stop me! I must try to save my father!
Let me go, I beseech you!

TOKISUKE

Hold him fast, lest he disturb the proceedings.

IWOKO. Do not let this delay you; go to the river bank. After finishing my prayers, I will be with you.

TOKISUKE (*to all assembled*)

Follow me!

[*Exit right; followed by the elders and people, a long, slow movement across stage to right. TOYOHICO endeavors to follow, but is restrained. YASUKUMA stands near by.*

IWOKO (*to the musicians*)

Watch the signal for the moment the box is lowered into the water, then play. (*To YASUKUMA.*) Are you not the builder?

YASUKUMA

Yes, reverend priestess! (*To TOYOHICO.*)
Nothing can help you now; pray, be resigned!
You, Oguma, come with me! We must drive

the first pillar; the bridge must last to our posterity!

[*Exit YASUKUMA, accompanied reluctantly by OGUMA. IWOKO and the priestesses again begin the ritual, their backs to the audience. TOYOHICO tries to break away, but is held back. TORIKO shows her anxiety for him.*

IWOKO (*observing TORIKO's concern*)

You, Toriko! Why is your attention wandering at this momentous time, when we are offering prayer! You must not stay in this place of purity! Descend!

[*She seizes and pushes her sister down the steps. Music is heard.*

TOYOHICO

Music! My father is being killed! (*He trembles with anger.*) It is because of you, accursed priestess! By my own hands I will cast you into the river!

[*He struggles desperately to free himself, and mounts the platform steps. The three priestesses oppose him. IWOKO draws a dagger from its sheath, which is suspended by a cord round her neck, and stabs TOYOHICO in the breast. He falls backward.*

TORIKO

Toyohiko! Toyohiko!

[*She runs to him, and raises his head.*

IWOKO (*to her assistants*)
Bring the offerings here!

[Two white stands are taken down from the altar; on one is a carp, on the other a pheasant.]

IWOKO (*regarding the offerings*)

Here, also, are two sacrifices. One represents the father who is being sunk in the water; the other the son who will soon be buried in the earth.

[She directs an assistant to show the pheasant to TOYOHICO; the priestess places it reverently before the dying man.]

TOYOHICO (*taking up pheasant*)

Ah, this is ——

TORIKO

The pheasant you saw when we met!

IWOKO (*smiling malignantly*)

Listen to words of old—

Will keep silence evermore!

His father sunk as a pillar at Nagara!

Did the pheasant scream not,

It would not be shot down!

[Descending from the platform, she stands looking down at TOYOHICO. He dies with the pheasant in his hands, TORIKO supporting his head. Music in the distance.]

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